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Summary record of the 11th meeting
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Chairman: Mr. Kuchinsky ..... (Ukraine)
later: Ms. Groux (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Switzerland)

Contents

Organization of work

Agenda item 98: Advancement of women (*continued*)*

Agenda item 99: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*)*

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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04-54967 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Organization of work

1. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to resume consideration of the issue of the invitations to special rapporteurs, independent experts and chairpersons of human rights working groups who had not received a mandate to report to the current session of the General Assembly. The proposed ad hoc invitations had raised a number of questions regarding possible financial implications, consequences for the programme of work, and the criteria to be used when considering such invitations.

2. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee), making a statement in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure, said that, in the case of the Committee's wish to extend invitations to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children, and the Independent Expert on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, who had not been mandated to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, it was estimated that travel expenses amounting to $18,000 would be required.

3. The mandates of special rapporteurs and independent experts fell under the category of activities considered to be of a perennial nature. Provisions had been included in the programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 for activities of that nature. Necessary requirements would be met, to the extent possible, from available resources. Hence no additional appropriation would be requested.

4. Should the Committee also extend its invitation to the Chairman of the Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights on the Right to Development, it should be noted that its members were representatives of Member States. The decision would represent an exception to General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), as amended, on the system of travel and subsistence allowances to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations. It was anticipated that the travel costs of the Chairman of the Working Group, amounting to $6,700, would come from extrabudgetary funds.

5. After the statement had been prepared, information had been received that the newly appointed Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons had not accepted the mandate. The statement would therefore be amended.

6. With regard to consequences for the programme of work, one hour had been allowed for each special rapporteur to make a presentation and respond to the Committee's questions. If the Committee invited three more people, one additional meeting would have to be allocated. However, extra meeting time had been anticipated for such an eventuality. Nevertheless, if the Committee should decide to invite other special rapporteurs or independent experts on an ad hoc basis, additional meeting time would be required.

7. **The Chairman** said he understood that the criteria for inviting special rapporteurs or independent experts to address the Committee required further consultation among the delegations. He suggested that Ms. Kusorgbor, Vice-Chairman, should be appointed as facilitator to lead the negotiations.

8. *It was so decided.*

9. **Mr. Cumberbatch Miguén** (Cuba) said his delegation had serious reservations about the Secretary's statement, particularly about the differentiated and discriminatory use of funds from the regular budget for the different mandates. The Chairman of the Working Group on the Right to Development was a well-known human rights expert and it was surprising that his travel expenses could not be covered by existing resources.

10. Cuba could be flexible about the interpretation made by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights if it was clear that extrabudgetary resources were available and that there was a guarantee that the Chairman of the Working Group could address the Third Committee. If the Chairman could not travel to New York under the same conditions as the representatives of the two other bodies, Cuba would oppose the invitations to all of them.

11. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) explained that the distinction related to the different status of the special rapporteurs, the independent expert and the Chairman of the Working Group on the Right to Development. The latter was the representative of a Member State; his travel and per diem expenses were therefore governed by different

rules; however, funds were currently available to meet his expenses from extrabudgetary provisions.

12. **Ms. Tomar** (India) said her delegation considered that the work of the Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development was very relevant for the Third Committee, which later would be addressing the issue of a comprehensive international convention on the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Consequently, it suggested that an invitation should also be issued to the Special Rapporteur on disability.

13. **Ms. Khalil** (Egypt) said that her delegation fully supported all the invitations that had been mentioned, but would welcome clarification as to how many invitations would be issued and on what criteria the invitations were based.

14. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said that, since there was currently no Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, the Committee could issue invitations only to three of the four persons mentioned in his initial statement on programme-budget implications.

15. **Ms. Abdul Aziz** (Malaysia), referring to the Secretary's initial statement, said she was surprised that the programme-budget implications for the Chairman of the Working Group on the Right to Development differed from those for other mechanisms and that his travel expenses might have to be met from extrabudgetary funds. The Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights had set up the Working Group; such expenses should therefore fall within the purview of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

16. **Ms. Zack** (United States of America), referring to the invitations to additional special rapporteurs, said that although her delegation believed that the Committee should evaluate such decisions carefully, seeking to avoid repetition between reports to the General Assembly and to the Commission on Human Rights, and recognizing the mandates of the mechanisms and the efficient use of budgetary resources, it did not object to them in principle. However, it had understood that the invitations had no programme-budget implications. The Secretary had now said that the invitation to the Chairman of the Working Group would require extrabudgetary resources, and that such resources were available. Her delegation would like clarification of the matter, because the United States was not prepared to accept a decision of the Committee that had programme-budget implications.

17. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee), responding to the proposal made by India, said that any new requests would have to be formally submitted to the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts so that it could evaluate whether they gave rise to programme-budget implications; the Committee would therefore not be able to take action on the proposal immediately.

18. In response to Malaysia, he understood that the source of funding for travel expenses and per diem was governed by different rules and regulations and varied according to whether the special rapporteur, independent expert or chairman of a working group was a private individual or a representative of a Member State.

19. In response to the United States, he said that, when the question of additional invitations had arisen initially, he had indicated that any new invitations would result in an assessment of programme-budget implications, although that did not necessarily mean that fresh funds would be required. In the case of the Chairman of the Working Group on the Right to Development, the invitation did not involve new resources. Funds were available to finance the travel of the four persons mentioned in his statement; however, since one mandate had not been accepted, the Committee could only take action on three invitations.

20. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that, while welcoming the invitations under discussion and supporting the proposal made by India, her delegation considered it important to identify criteria to regulate such requests. It would also welcome final clarification as to who would be appearing before the Committee.

21. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said that, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, the Independent Expert on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, and the Chairman of the Working Group on the Right to Development had been contacted and had expressed their intention of addressing the Committee.

22. **Mr. Taranda** (Belarus) said that his delegation welcomed the interactive dialogue with special

rapporteurs, but only in strict compliance with their mandates. He would like to know which delegation had proposed the need to develop criteria for issuing invitations to special rapporteurs and why the Committee could not follow previous practice concerning the interactive dialogue with those special rapporteurs whose mandates included reporting to the Third Committee.

23. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the question raised by the delegation of Belarus was one for the Committee rather than the Secretariat.

24. **Ms. Hastaie** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her country had always supported the practice of inviting special rapporteurs and independent experts to address the Committee. However, the current discussion was closely linked to the appointment of a facilitator. She suggested that the Committee should not be selective, and should issue all the invitations as a package.

25. **The Chairman** said that there was a list of rapporteurs whose invitations the Committee had already endorsed. The task now before it was to decide whether to issue invitations to three, not five, additional special rapporteurs, since the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons had not yet been officially appointed and because much more information and discussion would be needed regarding an invitation to the Special Rapporteur on disability.

26. **Ms. Naz** (Bangladesh), on a point of order, said that the Committee's decision centred on which additional special rapporteurs should be invited. Although the post of Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons was formally vacant, the Committee might surely consider inviting the incumbent-elect, formalization of whose appointment was imminent.

27. **Mr. Xie Bohua** (China) said he had wished to take the floor prior to the Chairman's announcement. However, his delegation agreed with the establishment of a facilitator to deal with the matter. The Committee's practice of inviting special rapporteurs and independent experts to address it was of long standing and such a contentious situation had never before arisen. He wished to know whether it would be procedurally correct to invite the Special Rapporteur on torture, who had recently tendered his resignation.

28. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee), replying to the delegation of Bangladesh, said that the appointment of the new Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons was not yet official. To the delegation of China he replied that the resignation of the Special Rapporteur on torture would become effective only on 1 December, but it was not known whether he would come to New York to address the Committee or whether the other 18 invitees would be available to do so.

29. **Ms. Groux** (Switzerland) supported the Chairman's proposal and said that the Committee should take a decision on the invitations to the additional special rapporteurs and independent experts currently on its list to which no objection had been raised. The programme-budget implications posed no problem because the money was available.

30. **The Chairman** said that delegations apparently wished to separate the decision on whether to invite the additional special rapporteurs from the decision on criteria. While the Bureau was ready to work with delegations on formulating future criteria, the Committee's specific task at the moment was clearly to invite the three special rapporteurs already on the list. He was unaware of any precedent, but while the criteria were still to be worked out, the invitations to those selected needed to be issued as soon as possible.

31. **Mr. Hayee** (Pakistan) said that any decision to invite additional special rapporteurs should be taken across the board and extended to all five. He was at a loss as to why action could not be taken on all five requests together. The Committee's decision should be beyond any suspicion of discrimination.

32. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said he had just learned that the outgoing Special Rapporteur on torture would be addressing the Committee. Concerning the comment made by the delegation of Pakistan, it would be awkward to invite the future Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons since her appointment was not yet official. The new proposal made by the Indian delegation to invite a fifth additional special rapporteur could not be dealt with at that time, since 48 hours were needed to prepare the statement on programme-budget implications.

33. **Mr. Cumberbatch Miguén** (Cuba) said that a final decision was needed. In determining criteria for invitations to special rapporteurs and independent experts, account should be taken of the importance of their subject and its interest to the Committee, the person's reputation and the contribution he or she

would make to the Commission's discussion. That having been said, Cuba was in favour of issuing all five invitations requested.

34. Given the Secretariat's need to clarify the situation regarding the budget implications of the additional invitations, the matter could perhaps be postponed to the following day, but greater flexibility on the Committee's part would enable it to invite them all, including both the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons and the Special Rapporteur on disability, who dealt with a specific group of people whose human rights were important. He proposed allowing the Bureau and the Secretariat more time to work out the finances with a view to inviting all five.

35. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said that, while the Committee might wish to consider inviting the future Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons if her appointment was finalized, he wondered what added value she could bring to the Committee's discussions if she had yet to start work.

36. **The Chairman** said that, while the Cuban proposal was practical, more than one day would be needed for preparing the statement on the programme-budget implications of the further two invitations. He suggested issuing the invitations to the first three additional special rapporteurs and deferring a decision on the other two to a subsequent meeting.

37. **Mr. El Badri** (Egypt) applauded the decision to appoint a facilitator but felt that, as a matter of principle, invitations should be issued on the basis of clear criteria. His delegation was alarmed that selection should be based on programme-budget implications, which could change from year to year. If it was decided to invite all five, then they must all be invited to all sessions as a matter of principle and not in accordance with budgetary considerations.

38. **Ms. Zack** (United States of America) said that her country had always supported the practice of inviting special rapporteurs and independent experts to address the Committee. While appreciating the Secretariat's clarifications and the Swiss delegation's assertion of funding availability, her delegation would like to know whether those resources would come from voluntary funds or from the contingency fund, because her delegation vehemently opposed any such charge on the latter.

39. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) reiterated that the travel expenses for the special rapporteurs, amounting to approximately $18,000, were perennial activities covered under the programme budget. The requirements would be met from available resources and no additional resources would be requested. As for the Chairman of the Working Group, who was a representative of a Member State, funds to cover his travel to New York were available from extrabudgetary resources; no additional funding would be required.

40. **Ms. Abdul Aziz** (Malaysia) said that the invitation to the Special Rapporteur on disability should be treated on an equal footing with the other invitations; it should be possible to take a decision in principle on that question as well if the programme-budget implications could also be absorbed.

41. **The Chairman** said he would take it that the Committee wished to extend invitations to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, the Independent Expert on the protection of human rights while countering terrorism, the Chairman of the Working Group on the Right to Development, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons and the Special Rapporteur on disability to report to the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

42. *It was so decided.*

43. **Ms. Naz** (Bangladesh) said that, in the view of her delegation, it was for Member States to decide if special rapporteurs at the beginning of their mandates could add value to the discussion.

44. **Mr. Xie Bohua** (China) said that, with 23 special rapporteurs or representatives scheduled to report, care must be taken to allow sufficient time for Member States to make statements under the item as well.

45. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said, by way of clarification, that the invitations to the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons and the Special Rapporteur on disability would be issued pending their acceptance of the appointments and their availability to come before the Committee. The relevant statements of programme-budget implications would be submitted in due course.

46. In reply to the representative of China, he said that the additional invitations indeed had implications for planning of meetings in the future, although some

flexibility had been built into the schedule for the current session.

47. **Mr. Cumberbatch Miguén** (Cuba) reiterated his delegation's view that the invitation to the Special Rapporteur on disability should not be conditional on the availability of funds.

48. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) drew attention to chapter II of document A/59/250, which spelled out that any decision taken by a Main Committee must be subject to a review of its programme-budget implications. He did not anticipate any difficulty in securing the necessary funding, but the procedures must be followed.

49. **Ms. Gro[illegible]** (Switzerland) said she hoped that the statement of programme-budget implications would be available as soon as possible.

Agenda item 98: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/59/38, Parts I and II, A/59/135, 185 and Corr.1, 281, 313 and 357)

Agenda item 99: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/59/115, 214 and 281)

50. **Ms. Aziz** (Pakistan) said that the increased attention being given to issues relating to women was heartening, but progress in raising women's awareness of their rights fell far short of expectations. Globalization, while providing opportunity to many, had made women more vulnerable to exploitation. Poverty eradication was a fundamental step towards a world free of exploitation, and the political and economic empowerment of women was an essential tool.

51. Pakistan recognized gender equality as a cross-cutting theme for all development programmes. Under the Constitution, women were equal stakeholders in political and economic development and there was no gender discrimination. The Ministry of Women's Development ensured that government policy reflected equal opportunity in education and employment. Legislation to curb the practice of "honour killings" would soon come before the National Assembly. The national policy for development and empowerment of women aimed at achieving gender equality and women's [illegible]ocial, political and economic empowerment, through sustainable development. Policy measures to enhance women's participation had been taken in the areas of microcredit, gender-mainstreaming, free and compulsory primary education, affordable primary h[illegible]alth care and public and private partnerships for development.

52. Local-government reforms had ensured greater participation by women in the political process. Under the reform of the Constitution, 33 per cent of seats in each tier of local government had been reserved for women. The momentum generated by local elections was also reflected in the general elections, where 60 seats in the National Assembly and 128 seats in the Provincial Assemblies had been reserved for women. There were 18 women out of 100 senators, and an unprecedented seven women in the Cabinet. Encouraged by affirmative action, women in Pakistan were working in all sectors of society and decision-making.

53. The agenda for women was vast and the challenges numerous, especially for countries like her own which bore the burden of poverty and external debt. However, it would persevere in realizing the vision of a society free from discrimination and exploitation.

54. **Mr. Gomez-Robledo** (Mexico) said that the forthcoming 10-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action would provide an opportunity to take stock of the challenges still facing women in the full exercise of their rights. The effects of economic and social problems remained more severe for women than for men.

55. Mexico had attempted to bring its national legislation into line with its international commitments for the advancement of women. The role of national mechanisms for women was more important than ever, and therefore, Mexico had supported the revitalization of the International Research and Training Institute for Women (INSTRAW). Through the mobilization of adequate resources and the strengthening of its mandate as the only body in the United Nations system devoted to research, training and information on gender equality, it would be possible to make progress under the basic strategies recommended in the Beijing Platform. More flexible coordination mechanisms were needed among the United Nations agencies related to women, including the United Nations Development

Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Sustainable development and enjoyment of fundamental rights by all could not be achieved without successful efforts for the advancement of women.

56. *Ms. Groux (Switzerland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

57. **Mr. Hyassat** (Jordan) said that, while there had been considerable achievements in protecting and advancing the rights of women, much remained to be done. The forthcoming review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action would provide an excellent opportunity to evaluate their implementation and identify any obstacles.

58. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were top priorities. It was important to consider ways of strengthening the mandate and funding of the relevant United Nations bodies in order to enhance the status of women. UNIFEM had played a significant role in promoting the rights and development of women. His delegation believed its capabilities and mandate should be strengthened, and the necessary resources provided, so that it could continue its work.

59. His country had been at the forefront in implementing the commitments outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other relevant documents, and had taken concrete actions to reform domestic legislation in an effort to eliminate all forms of violence against women — particularly "honour crimes" — and promote gender equality. Such actions included the abolition of exemption from punishment and the introduction of harsher penalties for the perpetrators.

60. The media had also played an important role in initiating the debate on, and raising awareness of, "honour crimes", which his country viewed as incompatible with all religious, human and cultural values. Such efforts had resulted in a fall in the number of such crimes, particularly in the past three years. It should be noted that they occurred primarily because of confusion or an erroneous understanding of Islam and local customs.

61. His country would continue its efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and called on the international community to take meaningful action to ensure greater equality and opportunities for them.

62. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) said her Government believed that the advancement of women had to be based on a comprehensive approach that considered the specificity of each society, and that the concept of equality was the foundation of her country's policies in all fields, including that of women.

63. Despite diligent efforts by international organizations, Governments, and civil-society organizations since the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, the final report of the twenty-third special session had revealed shortcomings in the implementation of the Conference's recommendations. The year 2005 will mark the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Conference and that should be a time to review the work programme and identify the impediments to progress. The effects of globalization on the economies of developing countries might leave them completely marginalized, which would inevitably affect women.

64. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/59/214). However, it proposed that future reports should outline the specific progress made in implementing the Beijing Platform, especially concerning the eradication of poverty and the elimination of violence against women.

65. Any approach towards the phenomenon of violence against women must consider the root causes of violence and the effectiveness of methods implemented to combat it, including national and international legislation. It was noteworthy that poor statistics about how widespread the phenomenon was hindered progress in finding solutions.

66. Her Government had established committees that enjoyed the support of civil society and women's organizations to follow up the Beijing recommendations, as well as the recommendations of Sudanese women's conferences, which covered education, health, peace, family, social stability, development and poverty eradication. It had submitted its national report on progress made in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the recommendations of the twenty-third special session. The steps taken towards peace in the Sudan would undoubtedly have a beneficial impact on the population's living and economic conditions, especially those of women and children.

67. In conclusion, her delegation reiterated her Government's belief that the eradication of poverty and combating all forms of violence against women, including the impact of armed conflict and living under occupation, were essential components for achieving marked progress in the empowerment of women. Her delegation called for a commitment to return to family values for the sake of a society that enabled women to play their natural role of educating future generations.

68. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland) said that gender equality was one of his country's priorities at the national and international levels. His country had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol and he urged States that had not yet done so to do the same. He welcomed the event to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention, but expressed concern about the number of reservations.

69. At its latest session, the Commission on the Status of Women had adopted agreed conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality and on women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building. His country attached great importance to the former issue and, during its presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2004, had focused on closing the gap between women's and men's pay, and on the importance of reconciling professional and family responsibilities.

70. The Commission's next session, which would review the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session, would provide an excellent opportunity to take stock of the implementation of commitments made and to identify areas in which efforts needed to be stepped up. Women's issues were closely related to other issues, such as development. His delegation therefore agreed that the review of the Platform for Action needed to consider other, upcoming United Nations conferences.

71. While considerable progress had been made in improving women's rights, vigilance was still required. He reiterated the issues of concern for his delegation, namely, trafficking in women and girls, violence against women, restrictions on the freedom of movement of women, women's lack of participation in political life, unequal pay and reproductive rights.

72. **Ms. Sauerbrey** (United States of America) said that her country had taken an array of steps to advance the rights, empowerment, well-being and prosperity of women, which continued to be among its core international priorities. One of the most pressing issues today was trafficking in persons. Her Government had taken a number of steps in that regard.

73. Child sex tourism was a particularly grim matter and fed the demand for victims of human trafficking. An act adopted in 2003 strengthened her country's ability to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish violent crimes against children, and provided severe penalties for nationals of [illegible] country who travelled abroad to prey on children.

74. In much of the developing world, women were dying needlessly during childbirth and, increasingly, of such diseases as HIV/AIDS. Her country had taken a number of important steps to improve access to health care for women and was working with many partners to define and implement policies for basic and emergency maternal health care.

75. Refugees and internally displaced persons, most of whom were women and children, were particularly vulnerable to poverty, disease and violence. Through international organizations and non-governmental organizations, her Government spent between $50-$70 million annually on refugee programmes addressing health, nutrition, sanitation and gender-based violence.

76. The majority of the world's poor were women. To reduce poverty and promote economic growth, a specific fund would assist countries that ruled justly, invested in their people and encouraged economic freedom. Girls' primary-school-completion rates would be a determining factor when deciding eligibility for funding.

77. Women's economic empowerment reduced poverty, improved the economic situation of families and bettered their countries. Microcredit was one of the most successful ways to meet basic needs, build stronger communities, support civil society and promote gender equality. For the past five years, her country had committed over $150 million annually to microenterprise development through loans, training and technical assistance.

78. She welcomed the recent elections in Afghanistan, at which voter turnout had been high. Her country was pleased to have contributed to the

remarkable political, economic and social progress that Afghanistan had experienced over the past two years. The new Afghan Constitution afforded all citizens, men and women, equal rights and duties before the law, including the right to vote and participate in the political process. Forty-one per cent of the people who had registered to vote had been women. Her Government had implemented over 200 projects to help Afghan women, ranging from education and health care to economic opportunities and political participation. A new women's teacher-training institute had recently opened to train Afghan women to teach literacy in rural and urban areas and 40 per cent of the 4.8 million Afghan children now enrolled in school were girls.

79. Progress was also being made in Iraq. A law approved in March 2004 guaranteed equal rights for all citizens and prohibited discrimination on the basis of religion, gender and other personal attributes. The law would remain valid until after democratic elections and the adoption of a new constitution in 2005. Her country was facilitating Iraqi women's involvement in their country's reconstruction, having allocated $27 million to special programmes for Iraqi women and awarded grants to a number of non-governmental organizations that trained Iraqi women in media, entrepreneurial and democratic skills and practices.

80. Her country was committed to advancing women's political participation and had introduced a draft resolution on that subject during the fifty-eighth session (resolution 58/142). It was also supporting many projects in various countries. All issues were women's issues — whether fighting HIV/AIDS and poverty, improving health care and education, promoting the rule of law, or encouraging business formation and the creation of good jobs. Empowering women through equal access to education and economic opportunity boosted their chances of making informed choices in society and gave them more tools to combat poverty and widen democracy. Such issues were important to making women and their families safe, secure and prosperous.

81. **Ms. Li** Xiaomei (China) said that, since the General Assembly's fifty-eighth session, the United Nations had made considerable progress in the advancement of women, the protection of women's rights and follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session.

82. During its latest session, the Commission on the Status of Women had adopted agreed conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality and on women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution, as endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in resolutions 2004/11 and 12. Her delegation had actively participated in those activities and was ready to work with all other countries to promote those goals.

83. The report of the Secretary-General on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/59/214) reviewed steps taken by the Assembly and its Main Committees during its fifty-eighth session to promote the achievement of the goal of gender equality through the gender mainstreaming strategy. Her delegation agreed with the Secretary-General's recommendations and urged the Assembly and its subsidiary bodies to take specific steps to ensure gender mainstreaming.

84. Her delegation attached great importance to the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and of the outcome document of the twenty-third special session, which would be conducted during the Commission's next session, and would cooperate closely with the Bureau and other Member States in preparing for it. The review should focus on implementation at the national level, so that experiences could be exchanged and gaps and obstacles identified.

85. Her country had made marked progress in gender equality since the World Conference on Women in Beijing, as reflected in its solemn commitment to gender mainstreaming, its advocacy of a balanced gender perspective in economic and social development, the establishment of a legal system to promote gender equality, the improvement in women's political participation and access to employment, education and health care, and the increased awareness of gender equality. Her Government was working actively with non-governmental organizations to prepare for the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Conference with a view to safeguarding and promoting women's rights and interests.

86. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that, nearly 10 years after the Beijing Conference, women continued to be excluded from the benefits and opportunities of globalization and to suffer most from the scourge of war, hunger and preventable diseases. The number of women in the working population had increased only slightly in the past 20 years and women continued to earn less than men for the same job. Two thirds of the world's illiterate and poor were women, and almost half a million died owing to a lack of care during pregnancy, childbirth or abortion. Without the necessary political will, the commitments made in Beijing and at the twenty-third special session would not be met. National efforts, particularly in developing countries, needed to be accompanied by international cooperation based on the principles of respect for sovereignty, independence, self-determination and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

87. A key objective of the Cuban revolution had always been the full integration of women, with equal rights and opportunities, in all spheres and regions of the country. His country was proud to have been the first to sign and the second to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol. The profound economic, social and political changes in his country had favoured the advancement of women. Nonetheless, a number of factors continued to hinder complete gender equality.

88. In 1997, his country had passed a law on the follow-up to the Beijing Conference which included actions aimed at eliminating barriers and creating the right conditions for an ongoing improvement in women's position in society. Measures had been adopted in employment, promotion and access to power, community work, legislation, reproductive and sexual rights, and the presence and image of women in the media. Such progress was all the more impressive given the United States' continuing economic, financial and trade embargo on his country, which affected women in particular.

89. His country reiterated the call on Governments, regional and international organizations, and the United Nations system to take steps to oppose unilateral measures that were incompatible with international law and the Charter, prevented the full economic and social development of the population of the countries concerned, particularly women and children, endangered their well-being and prevented them from fully enjoying their human rights.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.